

8. HMS PERMITS AND TOURNAMENTS

This section provides updates the number of permits for Atlantic HMS fisheries and the number of dealer permits for sharks, swordfish, and tunas in Tables 8.1 - 8.8. Section 8.2 reports the historical number, locations, and target species of HMS tournament registrations.

8.1 HMS Permits

Detailed information about HMS permits and regulations associated with those permits are available in the most recent HMS Recreational, Commercial, and Dealer Compliance Guides on the internet at http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/Compliance_Guide/index.htm.

Limited Access Permits

The LAP program includes six different permit types: Swordfish Directed, Swordfish Incidental, Swordfish Handgear, Shark Directed, Shark Incidental, and Atlantic Tuna Longline. The Swordfish Directed and Incidental permits are valid only if the permit holder also holds both an Atlantic Tuna Longline and a shark permit. Similarly, the Atlantic Tuna Longline permit is valid only if the permit holder also holds both a swordfish (Directed or Incidental, not Handgear) and a shark permit. No additional LAPs are required to make a Swordfish Handgear or any of the shark permits valid.

Table 8.1 Number of Shark, Swordfish, and Atlantic Tunas Longline Limited Access Permits and Permit Holders by State (2008-2015)

State	Directed Swordfish	Incidental Swordfish	Swordfish Handgear	Directed Shark	Incidental Shark	Tunas Longline	Permit Holders / Permits
ME	4	1	1	2	6	5	9 / 19
MA	5	1	9	2	10	8	22 / 35
RI	1	-	11	1	3	2	13 / 18
CT	1	-	1	-	1	1	2 / 4
NY	16	3	4	10	12	20	27 / 65
PA	2	-	-	1	2	2	3 / 7
NJ	27	11	2	22	27	41	53 / 130
DE	2	-	1	2	2	2	5 / 9
MD	3	-	-	1	3	3	4 / 10
VA	1	1	-	-	2	4	4 / 8
NC	10	6	-	18	10	16	28 / 60
SC	3	2	-	7	9	5	16 / 26
GA	-	-	-	2	2	-	4 / 4
FL	83	35	53	124	135	122	315 / 552
AL	-	-	-	4	2	-	6 / 6
MS	-	-	-	-	1	-	1 / 1
LA	28	5	-	24	33	37	63 / 127
TX	1	7	1	3	13	10	20 / 35
OR					1		1/1
Canada	-					1	1/1
Trinidad/ Tobago	1	-	-	1		1	1/3
Annual Totals							
2015*	188	72	83	224	275	280	599 / 1,122
2014	183	66	77	206	258	246	536 / 1,036
2013	185	71	81	220	265	252	556 / 1,074
2012	184	73	77	215	271	253	555 / 1,073
2011	178	67	78	217	262	242	555 / 1,044
2010	177	72	75	215	265	248	566 / 1,052
2009	187	72	81	223	285	259	636 / 1,107
2008	181	76	81	214	285	241	628 / 1,079

* As of October 2015. Number of permits and permit holders in each category and state is subject to change as permits are renewed or expire.

Incidental HMS Squid Trawl Permit

On August 10, 2011, NMFS published a final rule (76 FR 49368) that established a new Incidental HMS Squid Trawl Permit, available to all valid Illex squid moratorium permit holders. The permit authorizes the retention of up to 15 swordfish North Atlantic swordfish to be retained per trip, provided that squid constitute not less than 75 percent, by weight, of the total catch on board. The distribution of squid trawl permits by state can be found in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 Number of Incidental HMS Squid Trawl Permits by State (as of October 2015)

State	Incidental HMS Squid Trawl Permits
ME	2
NH	1
MA	10
RI	9
CT	2
NY	4
NJ	27
VA	4
NC	7
Total	66

Commercial Caribbean Small Boat Permit

The final rule (October 1, 2012; 77 FR 59842) to Amendment 4 to the Consolidated HMS FMP established the Caribbean Small Boat Permit. This permit allows the commercial retention of tunas, swordfish, and sharks for boats fishing in the Caribbean region. Currently, the shark retention limit with this permit is zero; however, if the retention limit were increased, permit holders could be allowed to retain and sell non-prohibited species of sharks. As of October 2015, 20 permits have been issued with the majority (14) in Florida. Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico each have one permit. There are two permits in the state of Texas.

Swordfish General Commercial Permit

The General Commercial Swordfish permit was established pursuant to the final rule (August 21, 2013, 78 FR 52012) that implemented Amendment 8 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP. This permit is open access and can be held in conjunction with the Harpoon and General category Atlantic tunas permits. The distribution of General Commercial Swordfish permits is compiled in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3 Number of General Commercial Swordfish Permits by State (as of October 2015)

State	General Commercial Swordfish Permits	State	General Commercial Swordfish Permits
AL	4	MS	3
CA	-	NC	63
CT	16	NH	23
DE	7	NJ	27
FL	90	NY	53
GA	1	PA	2
HI	1	PR	9
LA	3	RI	46
MA	169	SC	8
MD	4	TX	11
ME	98	VA	12
Total			651

Atlantic Tunas Permits

Commercial Atlantic tunas permits are categorized by gear type (longline, harpoon, trap, purse seine, and General category) (Table 8.4). The Atlantic Tunas General category permit authorizes the use of rod and reel, handline, harpoon, green-stick, and bandit gear, and distribution of the permit by state can be found in Table 8.5. HMS Charter/Headboat permit holders (Table 8.6) may also participate in the commercial tuna fishery.

Table 8.4 Number of Commercial Atlantic Tunas Permits by Category (2008-2015)

Category	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
Longline	241	259	248	242	253	252	246	280
Harpoon	26	23	29	24	13	14	14	17
Trap	9	4	6	6	8	7	3	3
General	4,031	3,824	3,849	3,764	4,084	3,783	3,396	3,129
Purse seine	4	3	3	3	3	3	5	5
Total	4,311	4,113	4,135	4,039	4,361	4,059	3,664	3,434

* As of October 2015. The actual number of 2015 permit holders in each category is subject to change as individuals renew their permits or allow them to expire. The General and Harpoon categories listed include those held in conjunction with a Swordfish General Commercial permit. All purse seine permits were eligible to receive Atlantic bluefin tuna purse seine category quota.

Of the 14 Atlantic Tunas Harpoon category permit issued in 2015, 7 were issued to vessels whose homeport state was Maine and 10 were issued to vessels whose homeport state was Massachusetts.

Table 8.5 Number of Tunas General Category Permits by State or Territory (as of October 2015)

State	Tunas General Category Permits	State	Tunas General Category Permits
AZ	1	NH	198
CO	1	NJ	145
CT	58	NU	1
DE	21	NY	169
FI	17	PA	7
FL	189	PR	67
GA	3	RI	143
HI	1	SC	23
KY	1	TX	21
LA	25	VA	60
MA	981	VI	7
MD	39	VT	2
ME	555	WA	1
MI	3	Canada	1
NC	344	Total	3,129

HMS Charter/Headboat Permit

Owners of charterboats or headboats that are used to fish for, take, retain, or possess Atlantic tunas, sharks, swordfish, or billfish must obtain an Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat (CHB) permit. The distribution of 2015 Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat permits is presented in Table 8.6.

Table 8.6 **Number of Atlantic HMS Charter/Headboat Permits by State (as of October 2015)**

State/Territory	HMS CHB Permits	State/Territory	HMS CHB Permits
AL	67	NC	326
CT	82	NH	105
DE	89	NJ	457
FI	48	NY	290
FL	527	OH	2
GA	23	OK	1
ID	1	PA	16
IL	2	PR	22
KY	1	RI	134
LA	78	SC	117
MA	704	TX	119
MD	118	VA	99
ME	120	VI	22
MN	1	WV	1
MS	24	Total	3,596

HMS Angling Permit

The HMS Angling Permit is required to recreationally fish for, retain, or possess (including catch-and-release fishing) any federally-regulated HMS, including sharks, swordfish, white and blue marlin, sailfish, spearfish, bluefin tuna, and BAYS (bigeye, albacore, yellowfin, and skipjack) tunas. It does not authorize the sale or transfer of HMS to any person for a commercial purpose. Atlantic HMS Angling permit distribution is reported in Table 8.7.

Table 8.7 Number of Atlantic HMS Angling Permits by State or Country (as of October 2015)

State/Country	Permits by Home Port*	Permits by Residence**	State/Country	Permits by Home Port*	Permits by Residence**
AK	4	1	NC	1,319	1,218
AL	415	362	ND	1	2
AR	13	13	NE	-	2
AZ	1	3	NH	218	278
BV	1	2	NJ	2,708	2,329
CO	2	5	NV	5	2
CT	591	682	NY	1,856	1,914
DC	2	5	OH	15	29
DE	808	519	OK	7	15
FL	3,896	3,615	OR	1	1
GA	109	188	PA	170	976
HI	1	1	PR	425	437
IA	2	4	RI	528	383
ID	-	1	SC	511	493
IL	12	30	SD	1	4
IN	7	14	TN	19	47
KS	1	3	TX	674	708
KY	8	19	UT	2	4
LA	689	693	VA	918	988
MA	2,470	2,456	VI	45	25
MD	1,035	1,004	VT	18	31
ME	419	347	WA	4	5
MI	16	27	WI	7	12
MN	5	11	WV	5	7
MO	9	13	WY	1	5
MS	193	222	Canada	13	24
MT	1	2	Not Reported	12	12
Total				20,193	20,193

* The vessel port or other storage location. ** The permit holder's billing address.

Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Shark Dealer Permits

HMS Dealer permits are open access and required for the “first receiver” of Atlantic tunas, swordfish, and sharks. A first receiver is any entity, person, or company that takes, for commercial purposes (other than solely for transport), immediate possession of the fish, or any part of the fish, as the fish are offloaded from a fishing vessel. Atlantic tunas, swordfish and sharks dealer permits (by state) are reported in Table 8.8.

Table 8.8 **Number of Domestic Atlantic Tunas, Swordfish, and Sharks Dealer Permits (2015 by State; 2008-2015 Totals by Permit)**

State/Territory	Bluefin Only	BAYS Only	Bluefin and BAYS	Atlantic Swordfish	Atlantic Sharks	Total
AL	-	1	3	5	2	11
CA	2	-	-	2	-	4
CT	-	1	4	1	-	6
DE	-	1	2	-	-	3
FL	2	8	16	88	31	145
GA	-	-	1	-	1	2
HI	-	-	2	-	-	2
LA	-	1	6	9	8	24
MA	6	11	79	17	7	120
MD	-	-	6	3	3	12
ME	14	-	13	2	1	30
NC	3	4	24	17	21	69
NH	1	-	5	1	-	7
NJ	1	12	37	10	8	68
NY	3	21	45	7	4	80
PA	-	-	2	1	-	3
PR	-	3	1	1	-	5
RI	1	5	27	7	2	42
SC	-	1	3	9	10	23
TX	-	3	-	2	1	6
VA	-	5	10	1	3	19
VI	-	2	1	-	-	3
VT	-	-	1	-	-	1
Annual Totals						
2015*	33	79	289	184	102	687
2014	32	79	308	195	96	710
2013	35	72	318	183	97	705
2012	30	67	313	179	92	681
2011	33	67	316	191	117	724
2010	32	58	323	181	108	702
2009	32	55	289	177	106	659
2008	30	62	303	171	128	694

* As of October 2015. The actual number of permits per state may change as permit holders move or sell their businesses.

*Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Display Permits, Letters of Acknowledgement (LOAs)
Chartering Permits, and Scientific Research Permits (SRPs)*

EFPs, SRPs, and display permits authorize collections of tunas, swordfish, billfishes, and sharks from Federal waters in the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico for the purposes of scientific data collection and public display. EFPs are issued to individuals for the purpose of conducting research or other fishing activities aboard private (non-NOAA) vessels, whereas SRPs are issued to agency scientists who are conducting research aboard NOAA vessels. Similar to SRPs, LOAs are issued to individuals conducting research from “bona fide” research vessels on species that are only regulated by Magnuson-Stevens Act and not ATCA. Display permits are issued to individuals who are fishing for, catching, and then transporting HMS to certified aquariums for public display. Chartering permits are issued to HMS-permitted vessel owners that wish to fish under a chartering arrangement outside U.S. waters. The number of EFPs, display permits, and SRPs issued from 2011 – 2015 by category and species are listed in Table 8.9. Amendment 2 to the 2006 Consolidated HMS FMP implemented the shark research fishery. In 2015, NMFS received 9 applications for entrance into the shark research fishery. Based on the qualification criteria, 7 were chosen to participate.

Table 8.9 Number of Atlantic HMS Exempted Fishing Permits (EFPs), Display Permits, and Scientific Research Permits (SRPs) (2011-2015)

Permit Type		2011	2012	2013	2014	2015*
Exempted Fishing Permit	Sharks for display	3	4	4	3	3
	HMS** for display	2	2	2	3	1
	Tunas for display	0	0	0	0	0
	Shark research on a non-scientific vessel	8	10	10	10	11
	Tuna research on a non-scientific vessel	5	5	4	2	2
	HMS** research on a non-scientific vessel	2	3	3	3	4
	Billfish research on a non-scientific vessel	2	1	1	0	0
	Shark fishing	0	0	0	0	0
	HMS** chartering	0	0	0	0	0
	Tuna fishing	0	0	0	1	1
Total		22	25	24	22	22
Scientific Research Permit	Shark research	3	4	3	2	4
	Tuna research	1	3	2	2	1
	Billfish research	0	0	0	0	0
	HMS** research	6	4	3	3	1
	Total	10	11	8	7	6
Letters of Acknowledgement	Shark research	7	7	6	8	8
	Total	7	7	6	8	8

*As of October 31, 2015. **Multiple species.

8.2 Atlantic HMS Tournaments

An Atlantic HMS tournament is any fishing competition involving Atlantic HMS in which participants must register or otherwise enter or in which a prize or award is offered for catching or landing such fish. Atlantic HMS tournaments are conducted from ports along the U.S. Atlantic coast, Gulf of Mexico, and U.S. Caribbean. Some foreign tournaments (e.g., those held in the Bahamas, Bermuda, and the Turks and Caicos) may voluntarily register because their participants are mostly U.S. citizens. Since 1999, Federal regulations have required that tournaments register with NMFS at least four weeks prior to the commencement of tournament fishing activities. Tournament operators may be selected by NMFS for reporting, in which case a record of tournament catch and effort must be submitted to NMFS within seven days of the conclusion of the tournament. Tournament landings of billfishes and swordfish are presented in Section 4.4.2.

Atlantic HMS tournaments vary in size. They may range from relatively small, “members-only” club events with as few as ten participating boats (40 – 60 anglers) to larger, statewide tournaments with 250 or more participating vessels (1,000 – 1,500 anglers). Larger tournaments often involve corporate sponsorship from tackle manufacturers, marinas, boat dealers, marine suppliers, beverage distributors, resorts, radio stations, publications, chambers of commerce, restaurants, and other local businesses.

Tournament registration and reporting forms are available at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/compliance/tournaments/>. Tournament operators may also request HMS regulation booklets and other outreach materials (e.g., shark identification guides and careful catch and release brochures) to distribute to tournament participants. In 2015, more than 140 tournaments requested and received more than 10,850 copies of these materials from the HMS Management Division. The number of HMS tournaments that registered each year from 2005 to 2015 is reported in Figure 8.1. Since 2005, an average of 260 HMS tournaments have registered each year. The highest number of HMS tournament registrations occurred in 2007. The number of registered tournaments in 2014 is the highest since 2007, possibly due to increased outreach and compliance monitoring, and may also be influenced by an improving U.S. economy and lower fuel prices. The following tables and figures are summary data from the HMS Atlantic Tournament Registration database.

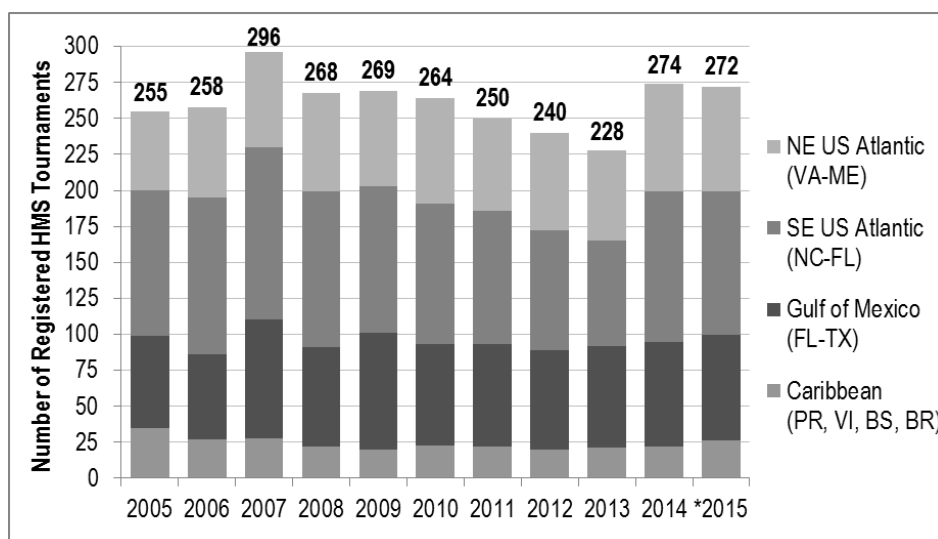


Figure 8.1 Number of Registered Atlantic HMS Tournaments by Year and Area (2005-2015)

*As of November 2015

The average distribution of HMS fishing tournaments along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coastal states and the Caribbean is represented in Figure 8.2.

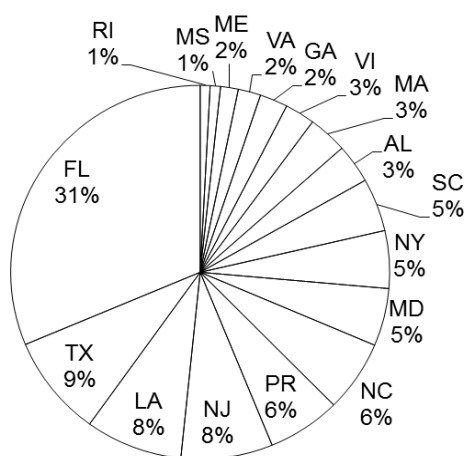


Figure 8.2 Percentage of Atlantic HMS Tournaments Held in each State (2005-2015)

Areas excluded (< 1%) are Bermuda (0.03%), Connecticut (0.1%), Delaware (0.24%), and the Bahamas (0.5%).

Table 8.10 provides the number of HMS tournaments in 2013 and 2014 that registered to award points or prizes for the catch or landing of each HMS. Figure 8.3 shows that sailfish, blue marlin, yellowfin tuna, and white marlin are the predominant target species in HMS fishing tournaments.

Table 8.10 Number of Atlantic HMS Tournaments per Species (2013 & 2014)

Species	2013	2014
Blue marlin	142	153
White marlin	128	138
Longbill spearfish	43	52
Roundscale spearfish	43	44
Sailfish	138	158
Swordfish	42	74
Bluefin tuna	36	96
Bigeye tuna	63	81
Albacore tuna	36	49
Yellowfin tuna	101	164
Skipjack tuna	30	33
Pelagic sharks	69	72
Small coastal sharks	16	19
Non-ridgeback sharks	16	17
Ridgeback sharks	11	12

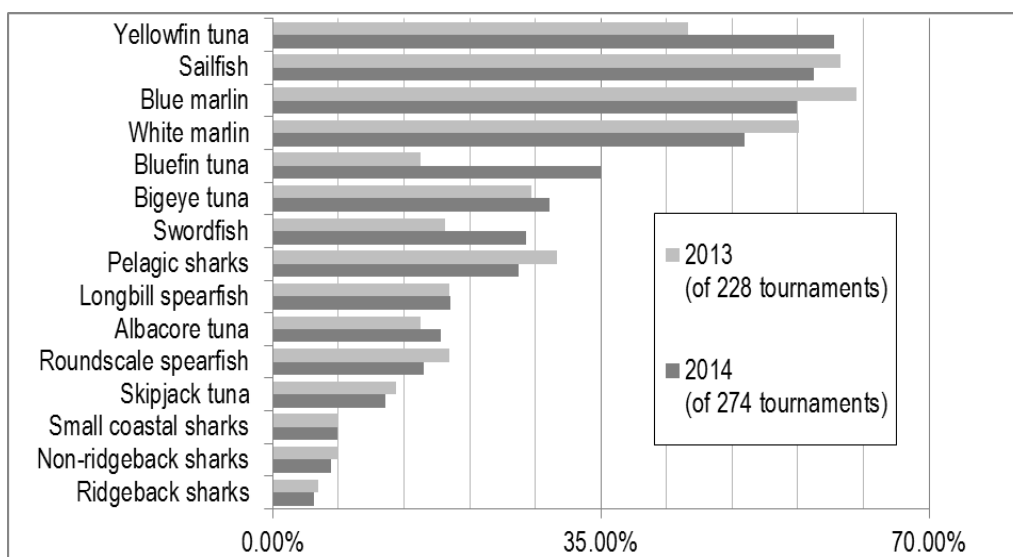


Figure 8.3 Percent of HMS Tournaments by Species (2013 & 2014)

Billfish Tournaments

A significant number of blue marlin, white marlin, and sailfish tournaments are “release-only,” utilizing observers, angler affidavits, polygraph tests, photographs, or digital video camcorders to document the live release of billfish. All billfish tournaments are selected for reporting to the Recreational Billfish Survey (RBS), including numbers of released fish.

Anglers fishing from an HMS-permitted vessel in any tournament awarding points or prizes for Atlantic billfish are required to deploy only non-offset circle hooks when using natural bait or natural bait/artificial lure combinations. The use of non-offset circle hooks increases the likelihood of post-release survival for billfish.

Figure 8.4 depicts the time of year that billfish tournaments are most prevalent in regions of the U.S. Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and Caribbean. The majority of the billfish tournaments occurring in January are sailfish tournaments along the Atlantic coast of Florida (Figure 8.5).

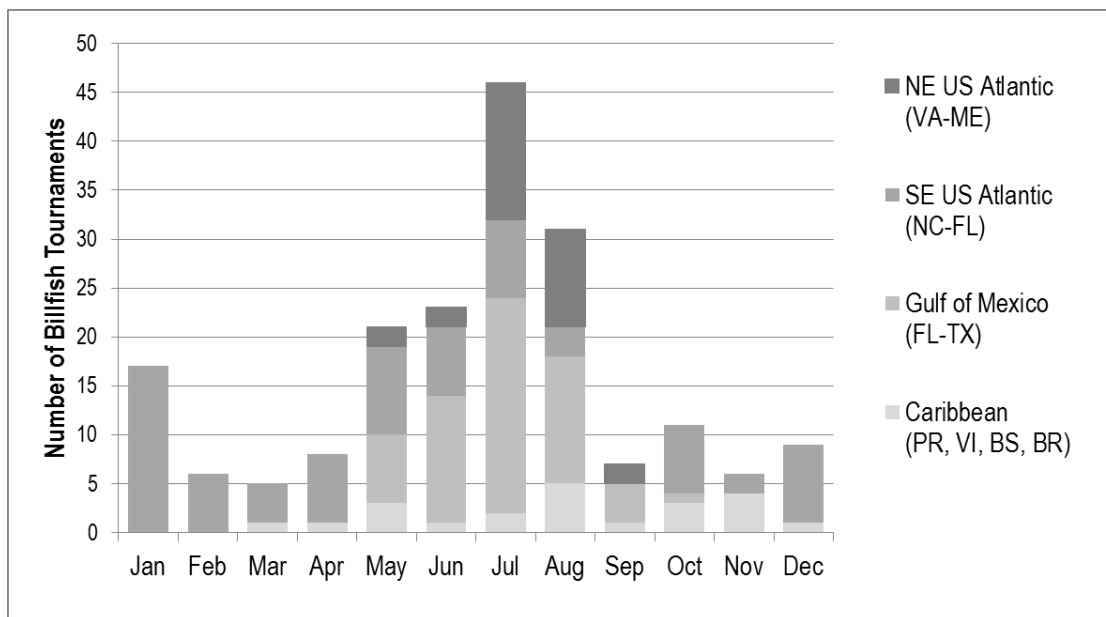


Figure 8.4 Number of Billfish Tournaments by Region and Month (2014)

Figure 8.5 shows the number of tournaments in 2014 that selected white marlin, blue marlin, sailfish, longbill spearfish, or roundscale spearfish as categories on the HMS tournament registration form. The figure illustrates that the Atlantic coast of Florida is the leading location for sailfish tournaments, and that white marlin and blue marlin tournaments occur in states all along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, including the Caribbean.

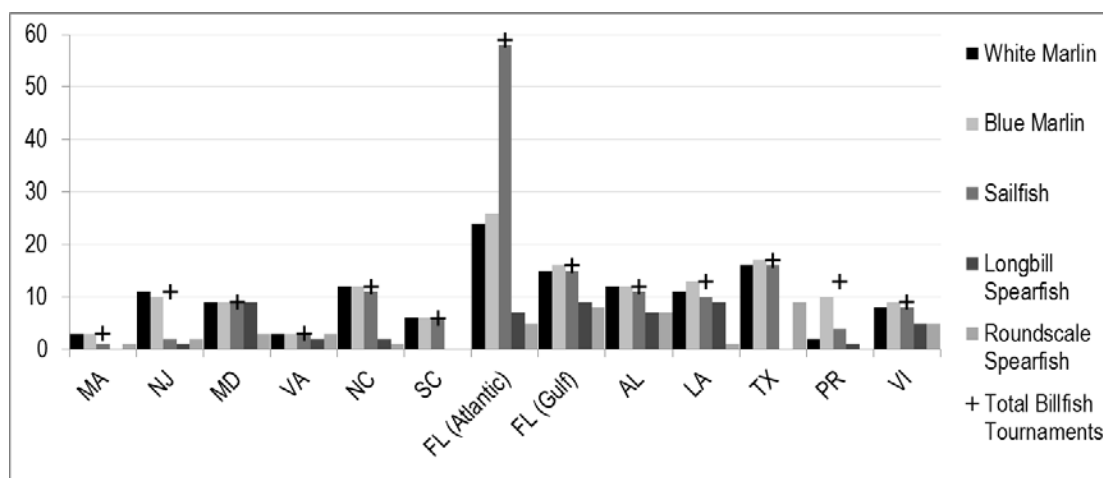


Figure 8.5 Number of Billfish Tournaments by Species and State (2014)

Due to confidentiality requirements, states in which fewer than three tournaments were held are not included. Note: Landing longbill spearfish is prohibited; however, they are authorized for catch-and-release fishing.